

DARK DOMINION™



J. JAMES 93
M. WITHERBY

"THE GATHERING DARKNESS"

HAUNTS OF THE
VERY RICH
Part One

CREATED BY JIM SHOOTER

MIDTOWN MANHATTAN,
ON BROADWAY NEAR
WEST 46TH STREET

5:56 P.M.

FOR YEARS THIS CITY'S
BEEN GETTING WORSE.
ESPECIALLY AT NIGHT.

BARELY PAST SUNDOWN,
AND ALREADY THE FEAR
IS SO THICK, YOU CAN
POUR IT ON PANCAKES.

THE PEOPLE WHO PREY
ON OTHERS ARE OUT IN
FORCE....

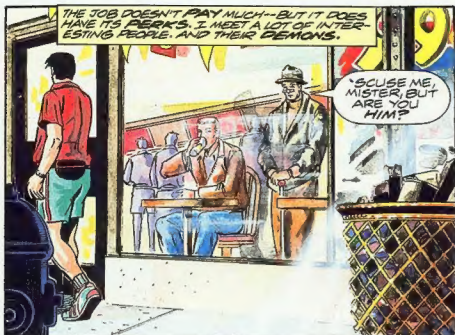
AND THE THINGS THAT
PREY ON THEM...

...WELL, THIS IS
THEIR CITY NOW.

I'M TRYING TO
CHANGE THAT.

DEVELOPED
BY
JIM
SHOOTER
AND
STEVE
DITKO

WRITTEN BY LEN WEIN / PENCILED BY JOSEPH A. JAMES
INKED BY MIKE BARREIRO, BOB DOWNS AND CHARLES YOAKUM
PAINTED BY TIM PERKINS / LETTERED BY GEORGE ROBERTS
EDITED BY DEBORAH PURCELL AND ED POLGARDY



THE JOB DOESN'T PAY MUCH--BUT IT DOES HAVE ITS PERKS. I MEET A LOT OF INTERESTING PEOPLE. AND THEIR DEMONS.

'SCUSE ME MISTER, BUT ARE YOU HIM?



WELL, I'M MICHAEL ALEXANDER. IF THAT'S WHAT YOU MEAN.

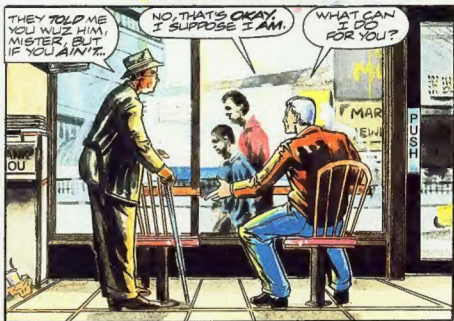
AN' I'M ELWOOD JENKINS--BUT THAT AIN'T WHAT I'M ASKIN'.



ARE YOU THE ONE THEY CALL GLIMMER?

ARE YOU THE LIGHT?

Donald's of TIMES SQUARE



THEY TOLD ME YOU WUZ HIM, MISTER, BUT IF YOU AIN'T...

NO, THAT'S OKAY. I SUPPOSE I AM.

WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?



I-I ALMOST DON'T KNOW WHERE T'START. MY LIFE IS SUCH A MESS....

I MEAN, JUS' LAST WEEK, MY WIFE OF 23 YEARS LEFT ME.

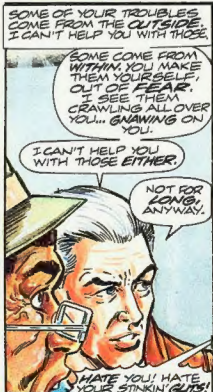
AN' WITH MY BUMLEG I CAN'T HOLD ON TO NO JOB.



I REALLY WISH I COULD, FRIEND, BUT I THINK YOU'VE COME TO THE WRONG GUY.

DESPITE WHAT THEY MAY'VE TOLD YOU, I'M REALLY NOT A MIRACLE WORKER.

PLEASE, MISTER ALEXANDER, TELL ME HOW TO MAKE IT BETTER.



SOME OF YOUR TROUBLES COME FROM THE OUTSIDE. I CAN'T HELP YOU WITH THOSE.

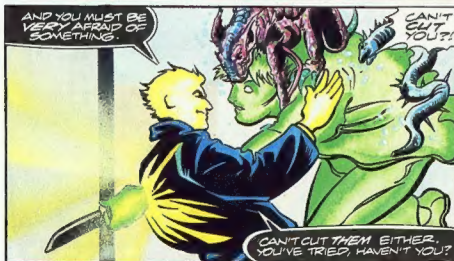
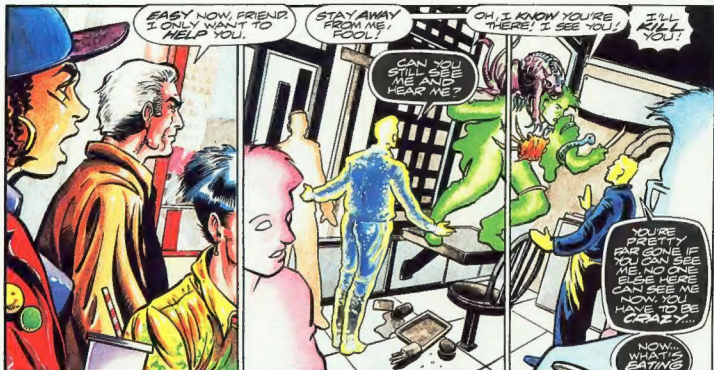
SOME COME FROM WITHIN. YOU MAKE THEM YOURSELF, OUT OF FEAR. I SEE THEM CRAWLING ALL OVER YOU... GNAWING ON YOU.

I CAN'T HELP YOU WITH THOSE EITHER.

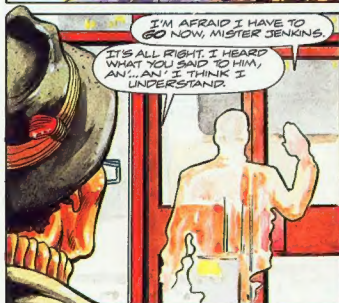
NOT FOR LONG, ANYWAY.

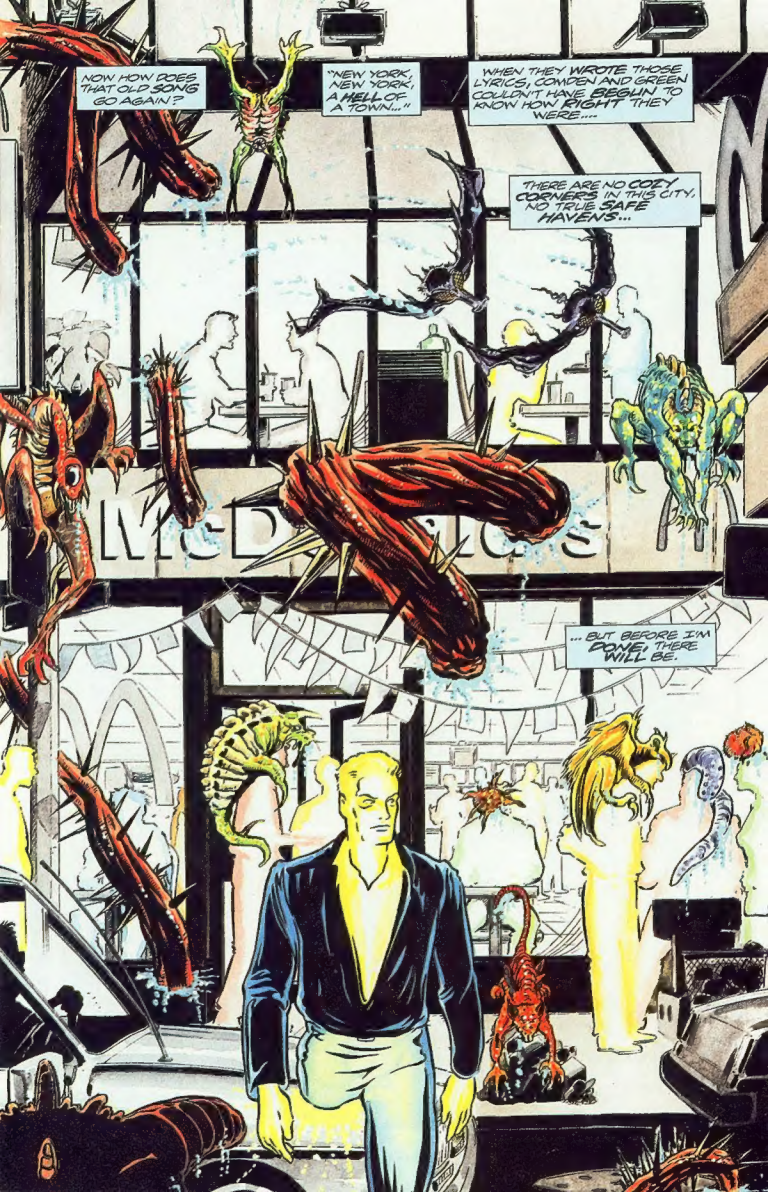
HATE YOU! HATE YOUR STINKIN' GLAS!











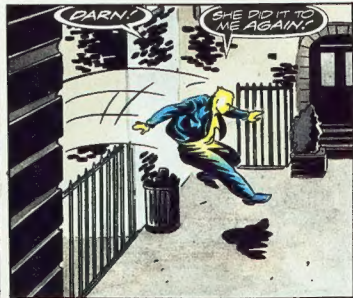
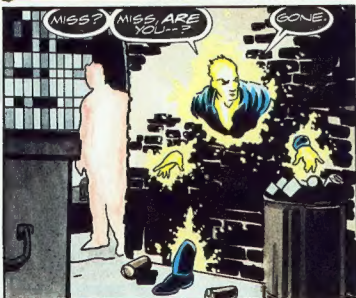
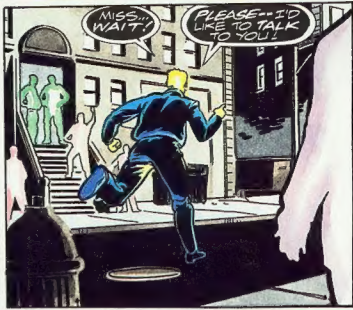
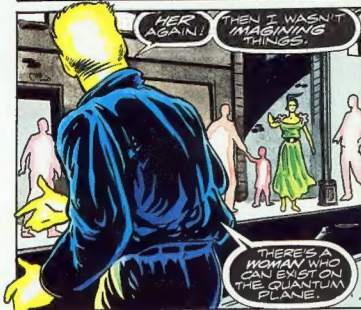
NOW HOW DOES
THAT OLD SONG
GO AGAIN?

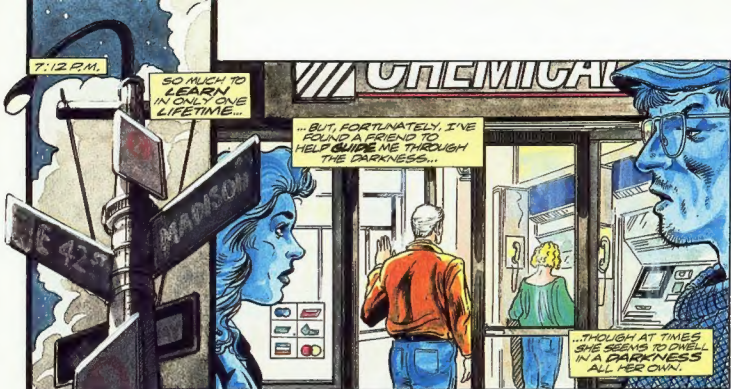
"NEW YORK,
NEW YORK,
A HELL OF
A TOWN..."

WHEN THEY WROTE THOSE
LYRICS, COMDEN AND GREEN
COULDN'T HAVE BEGINN TO
KNOW HOW RIGHT THEY
WERE....

THERE ARE NO COZY
CORNERS IN THIS CITY,
NO TRUE SAFE
HAVENS...

... BUT BEFORE I'M
DONE, THERE
WILL BE.





7:12 P.M.

SO MUCH TO
LEARN
IN ONLY ONE
LIFETIME...

...BUT, FORTUNATELY, I'VE
FOUND A FRIEND TO
HELP GUIDE ME THROUGH
THE DARKNESS...

...THOUGH AT TIMES
SHE SEEMS TO DWELL
IN A DARKNESS
ALL HER OWN.

HELLO, MERCY. HOW
ARE YOU THIS FINE
EVENING?

YEA, THOUGH I HAVE
TO WALK THROUGH THE
VALLEY OF THE SHADOW,
I AIN'T GONNA FEAR
NO EVIL...

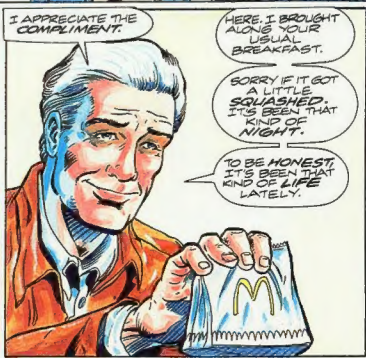
...FOR THOU ART
WITH ME AMONGST
THE CREEPIES
AND THE
CRAWLIES....

I APPRECIATE THE
COMPLIMENT.

HERE, I BROUGHT
ALONG YOUR
USUAL
BREAKFAST.

SORRY IF IT GOT
A LITTLE
SQUASHED.
IT'S BEEN THAT
KIND OF
NIGHT.

TO BE HONEST,
IT'S BEEN THAT
KIND OF LIFE
LATELY.



EVER SINCE I LEARNED TO
PUT ASIDE MY FEAR AND
SEE--REALLY SEE--INTO
THIS STRANGE SUBSTRATUM
OF REALITY THAT EXISTS
AROUND US...

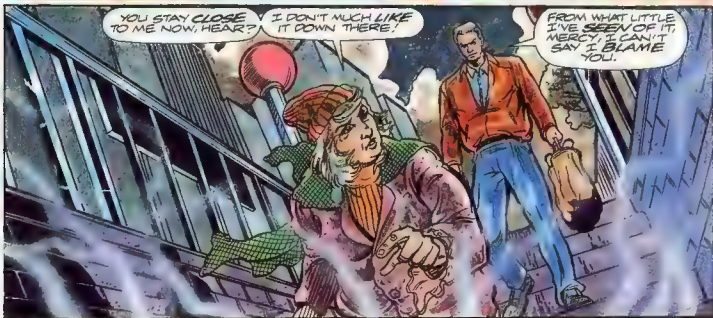
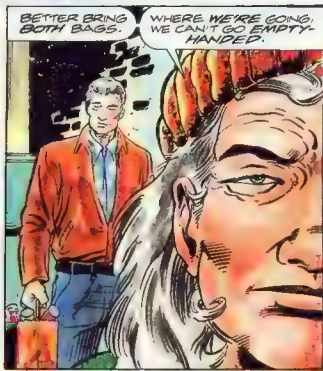
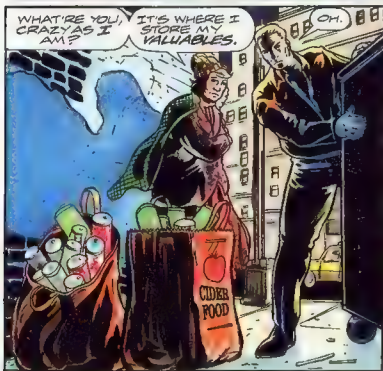
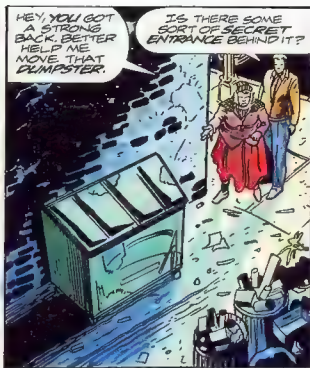
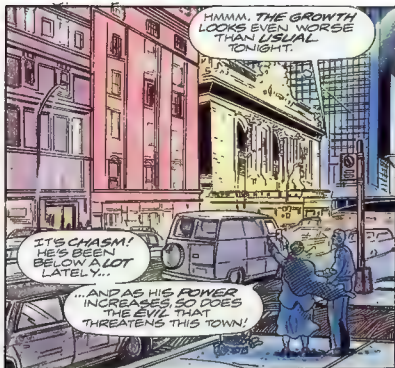
...EAT NOT
THE FOOD
DEAD MEN
EAT...

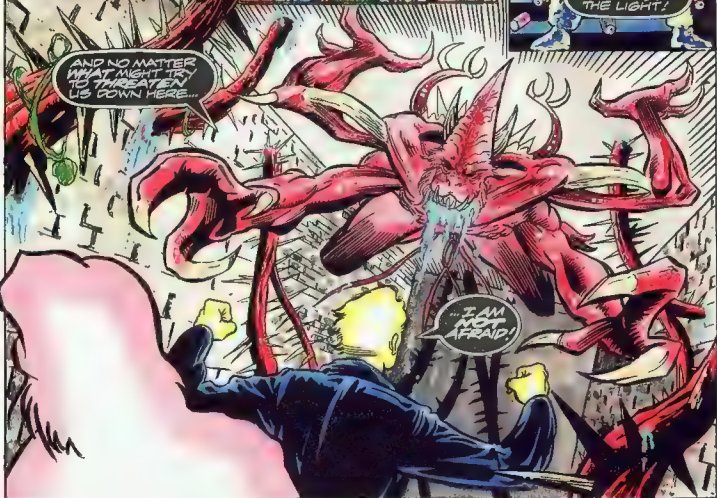
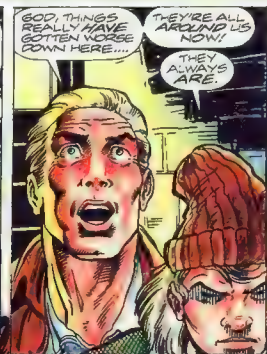


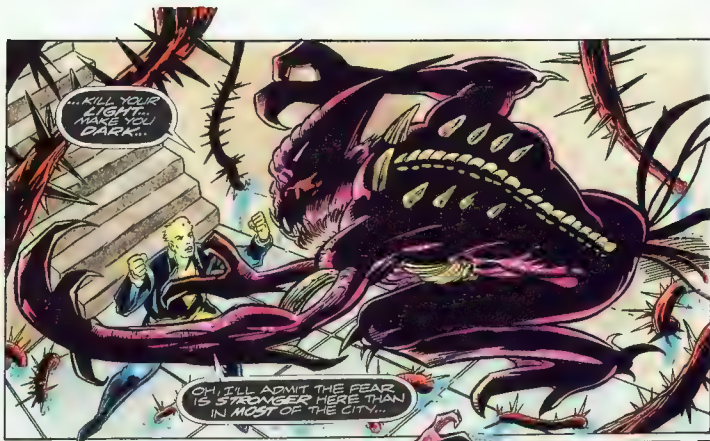
...I'VE JUST FOUND MYSELF
BURDENED WITH A LOT MORE
QUESTIONS INSTEAD OF
THE ANSWERS I HOPED
FOR.

SO LITTLE OF
WHAT I SEE
ANYMORE
IS TRULY
WHAT IT
SEEMS.

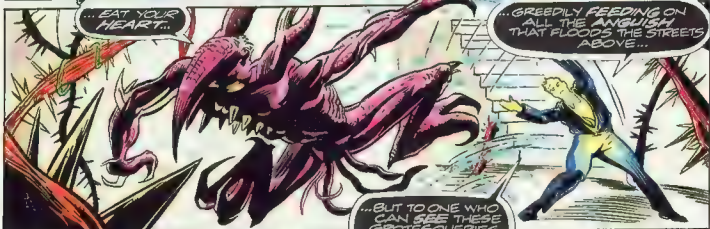








OH, I'LL ADMIT THE FEAR IS STRONGER HERE THAN IN MOST OF THE CITY...



...BUT TO ONE WHO CAN SEE THESE GROTESQUERIES FOR WHAT THEY TRULY ARE...



...THERE'S REALLY NOTHING TO BE AFRAID OF!



WELL, THAT WAS CERTAINLY INTERESTING.

GUESS I MUST BE ONTO SOMETHING AFTER ALL.



ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, MERCY?

ABOUT TIME YOU GOT BACK.

I'M DOING THIS FOR YOU, REMEMBER?

I DON'T EVEN WANT TO BE HERE.



HERE, YOU MISSED ONE.

SEEMS THERE'S DEFINITELY SOMEONE--OR SOMETHING--THAT DOESN'T WANT ME DOWN HERE TONIGHT EITHER.

AND BY THE WAY, YOU'RE NOT ALONE IN THAT.



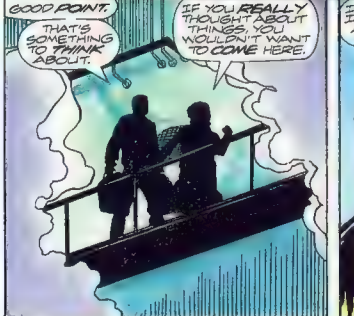
SMART MAN WOULD TAKE THE HINT.



SORRY ABOUT DROPPING ALL THOSE CANS...

...BUT IT SEEMS I HAVE NO SUBSTANCE ON THE NORMAL PLANE WHILE I'M IN MY QUANTUM FORM.

AND YET YOUR CLOTHES DON'T FALL THROUGH YOU, DO THEY?



GOOD POINT.

THAT'S SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT.

IF YOU REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT THINGS, YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO COME HERE.



IT'S NOT AS IF I REALLY HAVE A CHOICE, MERCY.

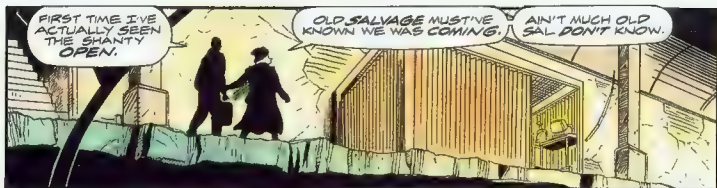
KNOWLEDGE IS POWER I HAVE TO LEARN THE TRUTH ABOUT THAT WOMAN I SAW.

THEN I GUESS YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE...

AND MAY THE GOOD
LORD HAVE MERCY
ON US BOTH!

WELCOME
BACK TO
THE
BOWELS!

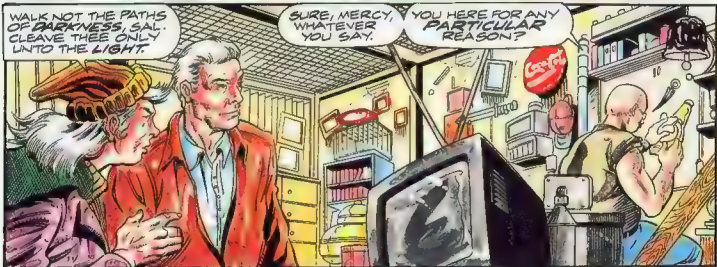




FIRST TIME I'VE
ACTUALLY SEEN
THE SHANTY
OPEN.

OLD SALVAGE MUST'VE
KNOWN WE WAS COMING.

AIN'T MUCH OLD
SAL DON'T KNOW.



WALK NOT THE PATHS
OF DARKNESS, SAL.
CLEAVE THEE ONLY
UNTO THE LIGHT.

SURE, MERCY,
WHATEVER
YOU SAY.

YOU HERE FOR ANY
PARTICULAR
REASON?



MY FRIEND MICHAEL
COMES HERE SEEKING
KNOWLEDGE.

HEY, YOU
THAT
MICHAEL?

THE ONE MERCY
CALLS GLIMMER?

GUESS
I AM.

WELL, THAT DON'T BUY YOU
NOTHING HERE.



YOU WANT
SOMETHING
FROM OL' SAL,
YOU GOTTA
GIVE SOME-
THING.

YOU THINK
I DON'T
KNOW
THAT?

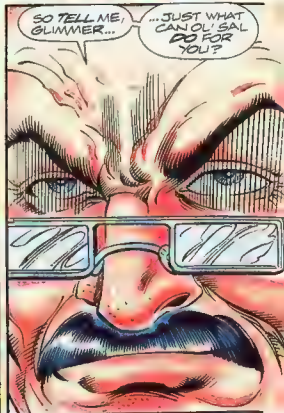
THEM'S
THE
HOUSE
RULES.

HERE, YOU GREEDY OLD
GOAT.



HHMMMM...NOT
EXACTLY THE BEST
VINTAGE...

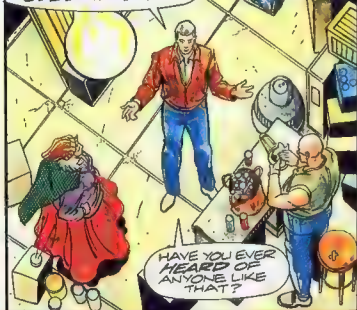
...BUT WITH
A LITTLE
POLISH,
GUESS
THEY'LL DO.



SO TELL ME,
GLIMMER...

...JUST WHAT
CAN OL' SAL
DO FOR
YOU?

I SAW SOMEONE TODAY,
SAL, A YOUNG WOMAN
WHO APPEARS TO EXIST
ONLY IN THE
SUBSTRATUM...



...A WOMAN WHO
WAS NOT FORMED
FROM THE STUFF
OF FEAR.

HAVE YOU EVER
HEARD OF
ANYONE LIKE
THAT?

WHISPERED STORIES OF
FOLKS WHO LEARNED
HOW TO ENTER THE SUB-
STRATUM MUCH LIKE YOU
AND CHASM HAVE...

...BUT WHO SPENT
SO MUCH TIME
THERE, THEY LOST
THE ABILITY TO
MAKE THE TRANSITION
BACK TO THE REAL
WORLD.

HMMM... LET OL'
SAL THINK FOR
A SECOND NOW...

NOPE, CAN'T
REALLY SAY
AS THAT
RINGS ANY
BELLS.

I HAVE HEARD
SOME RUMORS
OVER THE YEARS,
THOUGH...



MAYBE THIS
YOUNG LADY
FRIEND OF
YOURS IS ONE
OF THEM.



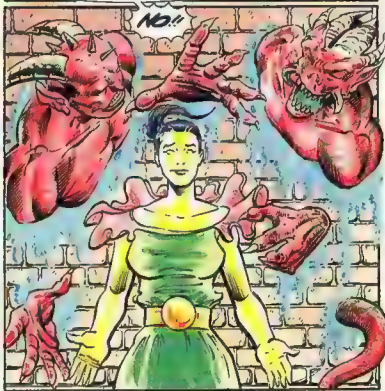
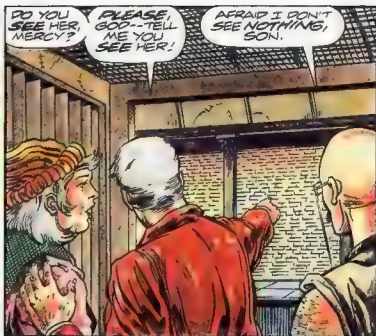
SHE ISN'T MY
FRIEND, SAL.
I DON'T EVEN
KNOW HER
NAME.

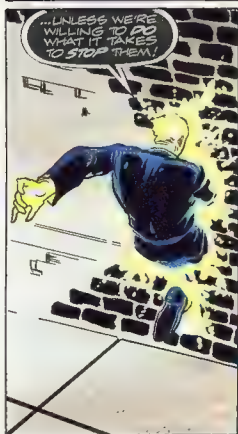
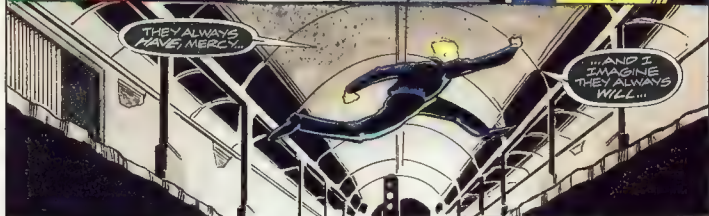
BUT IF WHAT YOU
SAY IS TRUE,
THEN IT'S POSSIBLE
THAT...

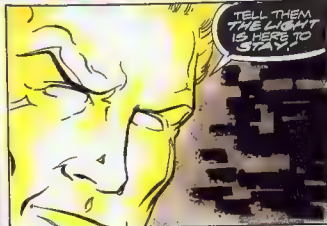
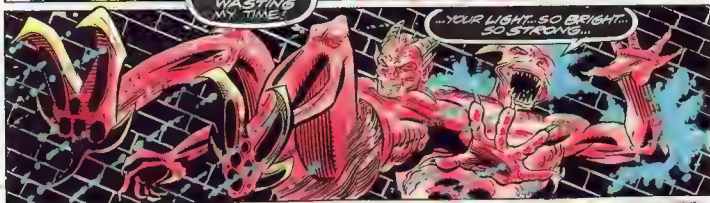
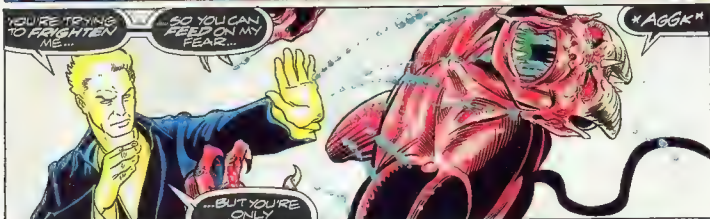
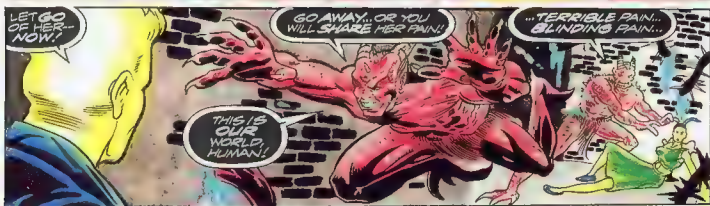
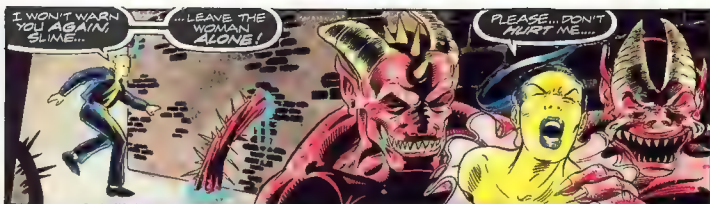


...WAIT!









NOW WHERE
IS THE
YOUNG
WOMAN
WHO...



WINNHHH!

WH-
WHAT
HIT
ME?

NOTHING FROM THE NORMAL PLANE
SHOULD BE ABLE TO TOUCH ME WHEN
I'M IN QUANTUM FORM....



AND NOTHING
FROM YOUR
PITIFUL NORMAL
PLANE DID!

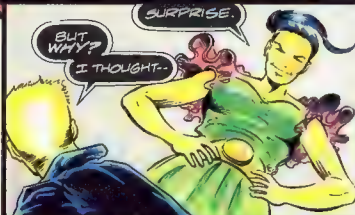


YOU?

SURPRISE.

BUT
WHY?

I THOUGHT--



WELL, YOU OBVIOUSLY
THOUGHT WRONG, OLD STICK!



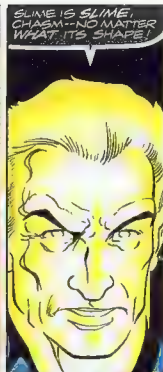
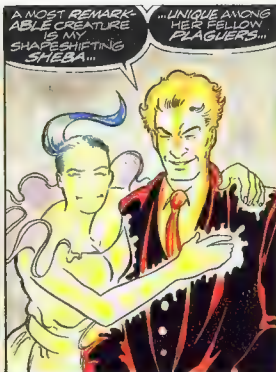
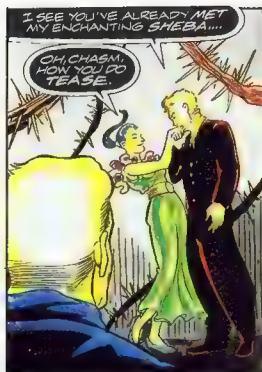
YOU,
TOO?

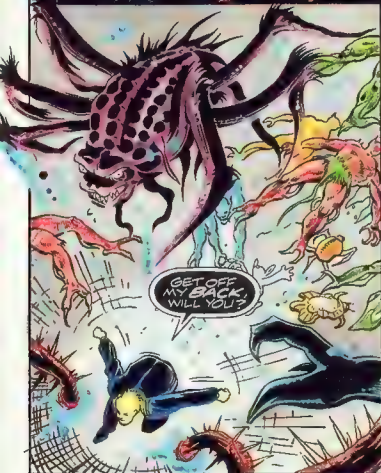
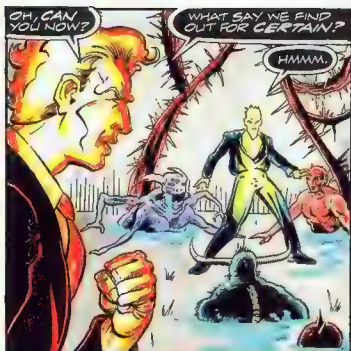
WHO ELSE?
THIS IS
AFTER ALL
MY DOMAIN.

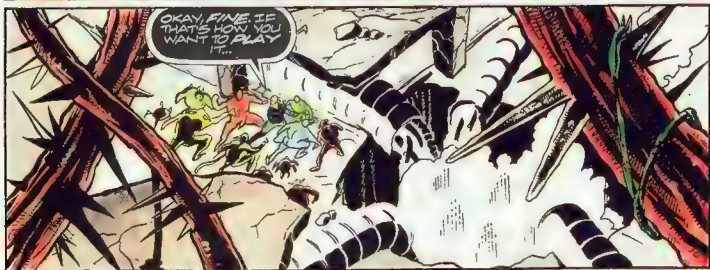
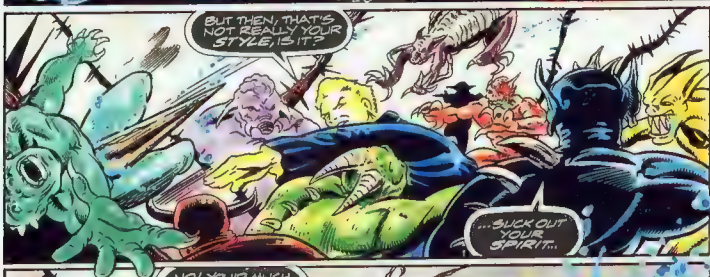
YOU MAY
CALL ME
CHASM!

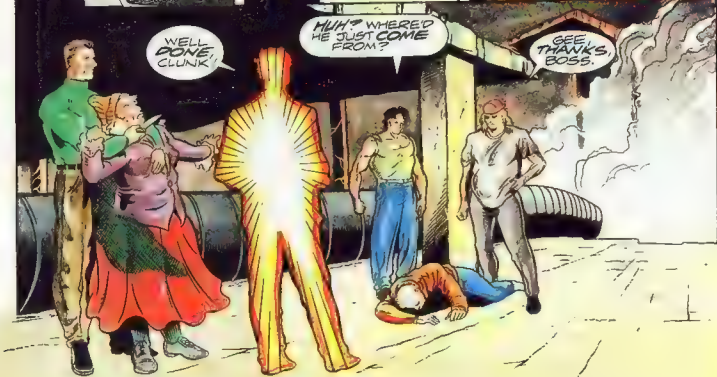
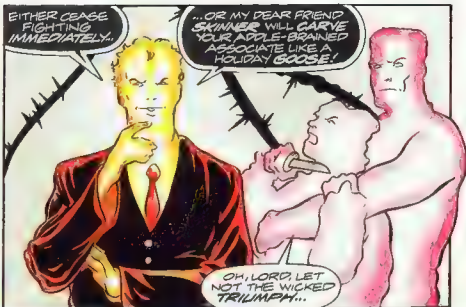
AS YOU'VE
DOUBTLESSLY
GUESSED BY
NOW, WE'VE BEEN
EXPECTING
YOU!











NOT QUITE SO IMPRESSIVE WITH HIS LIGHT TURNED OUT, IS HE?



CLUNK...SKEWER... WOULD YOU PLEASE CARRY OUR UNINVITED GUEST TO THE STEAMPIT?



YOU GOT IT, BOSS.

IT'S REALLY ALMOST A PITY.

A WORTHY ADVERSARY MIGHT HAVE PROVIDED AN ENTERTAINING DISTRACTION...

...BUT, REGRETTABLY, YOU ARE NOT HE!

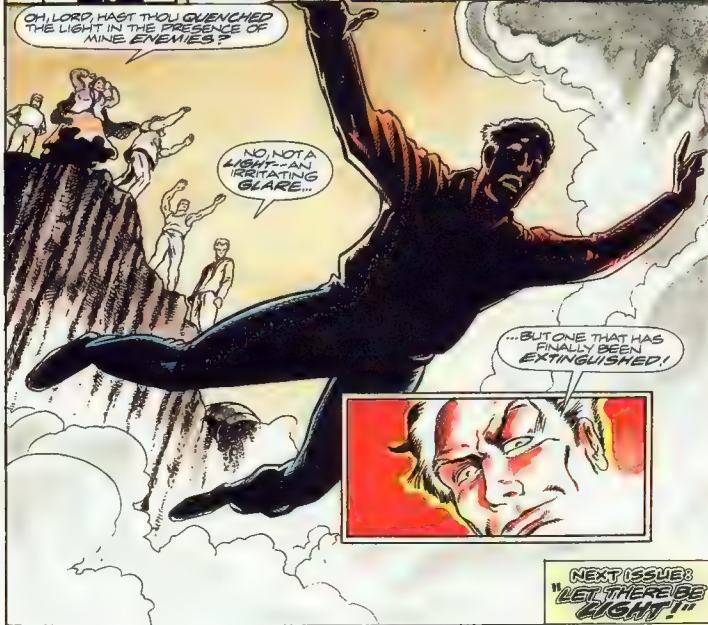


GENTLEMAN, KINDLY RELIEVE US OF OUR UNWANTED BURDEN.

THE STEAMPIT WILL STRIP THE FLESH FROM HIS BONES IN A MATTER OF MINUTES!

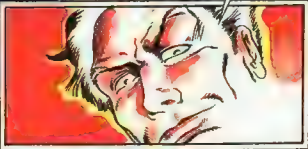


OH, LORD, HAST THOU QUENCHED THE LIGHT IN THE PRESENCE OF MINE ENEMIES?



NO, NOT A LIGHT--AN IRRITATING GLARE...

...BUT ONE THAT HAS FINALLY BEEN EXTINGUISHED!



NEXT ISSUE:
"LET THERE BE LIGHT!"

HERE IT IS!

WARRIORS OF **PLASM** Zero Issue

SPECIAL EDITION TIN SET



Authorized by DEFIANT™, The River Group Presents...

A True Limited Edition **PLASM**™ Collector's First Experience! From Limited Set Premium

- A full-color, three-level embossed collectible tin, with a lid depicting the four main characters of **PLASM**!
- The entire 150-card **PLASM Zero Issue**™ set on super-weight 18 pt. stock!
- A mail-in certificate redeemable for an **EXCLUSIVE**, brand new 16-page comic book! A new title from Jim Shooter and the folks at DEFIANT, available only with purchase of this tin set!
- A **PLASM** Level Two #4 of 4 foil card on 14 pt. stock!
- Four special cards featuring characters from upcoming titles in the emerging DEFIANT Universe!
- A Certificate of Limited Edition and message from Jim Shooter!
- Each tin is individually shrink-wrapped.
- Only 25,000 of these sets will exist.

The most collectible cards ever are now featured in one of the most collectible tin sets ever! But once they're gone, they're gone forever! Shooter fans and card collectors alike will crave this rare limited edition set, featuring many hard-to-get and never-before-offered elements. Don't miss out on this remarkable collectible. *Ask your retailer today!*



THE GOOD GUYS™

Be careful
what you
wish for...

You just
might
get it.





Jim Shooter

EDITOR IN CHIEF

Welcome to Manhattan. You'll notice that people stare at the sidewalk in front of them as they walk, avoiding even fleeting eye contact. Late at night, on a lonely block, they may cross the street to avoid passing close by you, though it's a well-lit block, though you're well-dressed and unthreatening, though probably hundreds of people are within shouting distance. You step into the elevator in an apartment building. A person already in the elevator cab darts out just before the door closes to avoid riding alone with you, though they've probably seen you before, though they know you've passed the scrutiny of the doorman.

Don't get in trouble here. No one will help you. No one wants to get involved, because then they may wind up in trouble, too, and who's going to help them? They turn their backs, they cross the street, they ignore you.

They're afraid. A palpable fear pervades this town. If you live here, you know it intimately. Anyone who spends much time here soon becomes aware of it. People from other big cities less afflicted sense it instantly. Small-town midwesterners often have to get mugged first. It's not *entirely* paranoia after all.

I've been thinking about this for a long time. I thought about it while sitting in a hearing room once listening to a superficially respectable-looking fellow lying his tail off under oath. As I watched this fellow shifting, sweating and scrambling to keep his dissembling sounding credible, I realized that he was very much afraid. And I realized that it's not the crime and violence in the city that cause the fear—it's the other way around.

It's the unspoken "or else" that lets you understand the way fear drives

evil. Gotta steal it *or else* I'll never get it. Gotta get them *or else* they'll get me. Gotta eat it, have it, do it now, *or else* my one chance will be gone. Gotta look down on everybody *or else* they'll look down on me.

Fear is the root of all evil. Works of evil create the climate for more fear. It's not entirely paranoia....

Somewhere along the line, a balance was tipped, and Manhattan began a long, slow slide into the abyss. I said the fear was palpable. It's getting worse.

Our new title, debuting with this issue, is called DARK DOMINION™. It's about Manhattan. It's about fear and evil and the one man who *isn't* afraid. It was created by myself and Steve Ditko, who, of course, created *Doctor Strange* and cocreated *Spider-Man*. It's written by Len Wein, who brought you *The Phantom Stranger*, *Swamp Thing*, and the new *X-Men*. It's drawn by Joe James and inked by Bob Downs and Mike Barreiro. It's powerful, super-action-filled, chilling, intense stuff. It's the cornerstone of the DEFIANT universe. I rarely do a salespitch in my column, but this one I especially recommend.

Don't be afraid.

Regarding Marvel's lawsuit against us: The trial is over, and we're waiting for the judge to give us the verdict. I'll let you know what happens. I appreciate the letters of support. Thanks.

In closing, I'd like to offer you these thoughts to ponder:

Ours is a universe governed by quantum mechanics, wherein matter is also energy and particles are also waves.

We are each one a coalescence of forces in the quantum field, an eddy in the stream of timespace—a radiant

nexus of energy, organized into a form that our limited senses perceive as solid matter.

Like a magnet that bends unseen lines of force around itself, which iron fillings sprinkled on a piece of paper will betray, we are each one a powerful generator of an unseen nimbus of force.

Given our limited senses, it is difficult to conceive of the quantum nature of things. We bite into an apple—a simple event—but in quantum terms, two fields of energy are interacting, one shearing through the other.

Drops of nectar composed of minute particles, which are also waves, transact with waves, which are also particles, which comprise the sensory structures on our tongues. Then more waves are relayed across a vast distance, relative to the quantum scale, to a central locus, where they trigger a series of reactions. Thus we conceive of the nature of the energy field we have just encountered—we taste the apple.

Conception is reality in our quantum universe.

We can conceive far more than we can perceive.

There are exactly as many things in Heaven and Earth as are dreamt of in our philosophy.

All we imagine is real.

Only the limits are imaginary.

Defiantly,

FYM



WARRIORS OF PLASM

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DEFIANT



Ed Polgardy

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

From the moment I read Jim Shooter's script for **DARK DOMINION** #0, I knew that the series was going to be something special. Jim's story instantly sucked me into Michael Alexander's world, giving me the same rush of excitement I felt on discovering Lee and Ditko's *Spider-Man* back in the late 1960s. Of course, in 1968 I was seven years old, and my mind wasn't clouded with adult sensibilities. As I grew older, I found it increasingly difficult to lose myself in any type of fiction, especially in comic book stories that featured inhumanly muscled heroes battling super-powered villains *ad nauseam*, with the fighting taking up about ninety-nine percent of an issue. The vast majority of these super-heroic tales also seemed incomplete, not even offering a linear beginning, middle, and end!

With **DARK DOMINION**, it's different: The title's protagonist is a modest—and modestly dressed (i.e., no spandex or tights in sight)—man in his early fifties; the other characters populating the story are engagingly realistic; and the multitude of creepy crawlers lurking in the Quantum Substratum are intriguing visual representations of the spiritual demons that have haunted the collective id of humankind since the beginning of time.

And the story...!

I couldn't wait to read more—I was thrilled to be involved with such a fascinating concept.

Even so, giving birth is a painful experience, whether biologically or in the creation, metaphorically speaking, of a new comic-book series.

Len Wein (the cocreator of DC's *Swamp Thing* and the new *X-Men* for Marvel) was brought aboard to write the continuing series, so I knew each

issue would be well-crafted. But Steve Ditko, the original penciler (the same amazing artist who had cocreated the *Spider-Man* comics I loved as a kid!), had decided that he wasn't philosophically comfortable with the concept, and, after delivering his pages for issue #0, he told us that he'd decided not to continue with the book.

The next few weeks were spent hectically trying to line up another penciler. We asked a few well-known artists, but because of the book's deadlines, we couldn't find anyone who could fit it into his already-busy schedule. For a day or two, I thought I had been transported into Michael Alexander's universe: I was starting to feel the Spiders of Anxiety working their way up my spine. Then Deborah Purcell urged Jim Shooter to consider the work of our Production Coordinator, Joe James, who was penciling the backs of some **DARK DOMINION** #0 character cards. The drawings were top-notch: They were beautifully rendered and captured the look of the series exactly as we had envisioned it. Joe accepted the challenge and immediately began penciling the stellar story you're now holding.

The inking chores for the first issue were shared by Bob Downs and Mike Barreiro, both of whom did a wonderful job.

Add to this list the incredible talent of painter Tim Perkins, and I'm sure you'll agree we've managed to put together one of the best creative teams in comics!

Drop us a line, and let us know what you think.



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